

TOP 12 STORIES OF THE YEAR

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VON MILLER

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REIGNING NCAA SACK LEADER &
AI SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR

ALSO INSIDE

National Champs in Track
Conference Realignment
Baseball Wins Big 12
Football Recruiting
Brodie Greene
Tobi Oyediji
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JULY/AUGUST 10

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BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04



FIND THE 01

On the Cover: Von Miller, AI Sportsperson of the Year. Photo by Brian Davis '01.

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Do you recognize the above photo from campus? Send an e-mail to photo@aggiemag.com and let us know where it was taken. Be the first to get it right and we'll send you a **free gift**. Look for the answer in the next issue of *AI*. The May/June 2010 photo was of the Muster monument near the Academic Building.

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publisher's note

Howdy!

As we selected our annual top 12 stories and sportsperson of the year for 2009-10, I was reminded of how much things have changed in Aggie athletics since we started this magazine four years ago. While we've always tried to cover every NCAA sport in AI, I remember when the year really used to focus on the four football seasons: fall practice, the season, national signing day in recruiting and spring practice. And while those are still a big part of our focus, it sure is nice to have such successful programs throughout the A&M athletic department.

That could not have been more evident when the final standings for the Division I Learfield Sports Directors' Cup were released earlier this month. The Aggie athletics program recorded a record-setting year finishing in sixth place, well ahead of any other Big 12 school. The previous best finish was 12th place in 2007-08. Of the 19 sports that factored into the rankings, A&M finished in the top 20 in 15 of the sports and eight Aggie teams finished in the top ten.

Football is still king, of course, so if Mike Sherman's boat continues moving forward, we could witness unprecedented heights for A&M athletics in the near future. Needless to say, all the success around Aggieworld made selecting our top 12 stories of the year a challenge. You can read those starting on page 15.

We're also happy to name Von Miller our AI Sportsperson of the Year. There were several worthy candidates to choose from throughout Aggie athletics. Donald Sloan would have been an easy selection for what he did for Aggie basketball. Brodie Greene deserved consideration for his senior campaign and Big 12 tournament performance (read a Q&A with Brodie on page 12). Jerrod Johnson and Meagan May were both on our list for rewriting the record books in their respective sports. But ultimately, Miller earned a unanimous vote from the AI staff for his All-American season and decision to return for his senior year. Read more about Miller on page 20.

Last but certainly not least, we couldn't put this issue out without talking a little more about the madness of conference realignment. I'm not going to sugarcoat it – the more arguments I read for and against each option on the table for Texas A&M, the more I was hoping we would be SEC bound. In fact, I let myself get to the point where I was going to be disappointed if A&M to the SEC didn't happen. Boy was I disappointed. I'm sure it wasn't an easy decision to make by any means, but I'm still convinced it was the best option for the long-term future of Texas A&M. For now, we will move on with plans to be in the ten team Big 12 band-aid. Frankly, I'll be surprised if it's still around in two years, but it should be an interesting story to watch unfold regardless. Read another Aggie's opinion on the matter on page 23 and our top 12 reasons to join the SEC on page 24.

Have a great summer Ags, and be ready to BTHO SEA on September 4!

Brian '01

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Aggieland Illustrated is an independently owned, Aggie owned and operated publication and in no way reflects the views or opinions of Texas A&M University.

Aggieland Illustrated (ISSN 1932-9105) is published eight times a year in the United States by Aggie Illustrated, PO Box 6841, Bryan, TX 77805-6841. Reproduction or use of editorial or graphics content in any manner without permission is prohibited. Photographs and manuscripts for publication are welcome, but will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Address all subscription inquiries and change of address requests to Aggie Illustrated, PO Box 6841, Bryan, TX 77805-6841. Allow up to eight weeks for response.

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Volume 4, Number 8

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snapshot





rising to the occasion

Junior Tabarie Henry crosses the finish line in the men's 4 x 400 relay at the NCAA Outdoor Championships. After finishing second three years in a row in the 4 x 400, the Aggies won the relay in 3:00.89 to set a school record. The victory gave A&M the lead in the standings over Florida and host Oregon, and ultimately clinched their second consecutive national championship. Photo by Errol Anderson.





5.21.92 ~ 5.16.10

Just days before his 18th birthday, Aggie basketball recruit Tobi Oyedeji was on the way home from his senior prom when he was involved in a head-on collision that took his life. While Oyedeji was a few weeks away from officially becoming a Texas A&M student, he will always be an Aggie.

Photo by Dustin Snipes/icon SMI.



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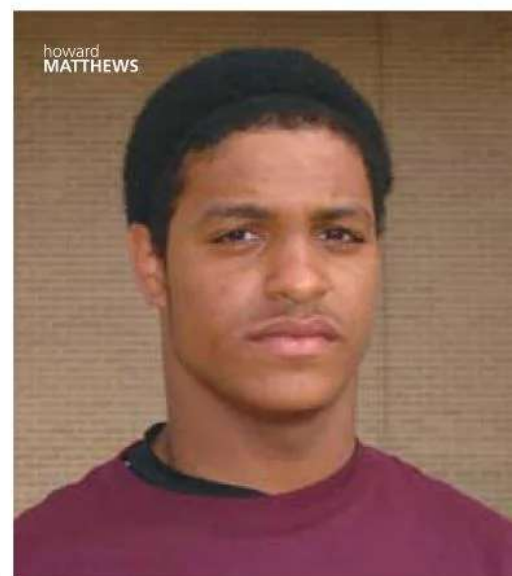
difference MAKERS

BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

Houston's Clear Springs High School features one of the top defensive units in all of 5A Texas Football. *Dave Campbell's Texas Football* picked Springs to finish atop district 24-5A, and predicted them to make an appearance in the Division II state championship game. In May, two of its most ballyhooed stars, Dave Campbell's Superteam outside linebacker Donnie Baggs and safety/athlete Howard Matthews, pledged their commitments to the Fightin' Texas Aggies.

Matthews joins Baggs at Clear Springs this season after transferring from Seguin, where he was the former teammate of A&M offensive line commit and Aggie legacy Joseph Cheek. While he's scheduled to get his first look at safety this fall, Matthews' athleticism could land him at any number of positions.

When you watch him on tape, Matthews shows almost a complete disregard for his body, laying out on pass breakup attempts and crashing into ball carriers at the point of attack. At 6-1, 205 pounds, Matthews could spin down to linebacker once he gets to the A&M campus. However, his combination of size, speed and





donnie
BAGGS

natural instincts would be a welcomed addition to the secondary as well.

Baggs measures in at 6-1, 210 pounds, and posted 101 tackles (48 unassisted), 14 tackles for loss, 7 sacks, 4 forced fumbles, 2 fumble recoveries and 27 quarterback hurries last season. On film, Baggs shows a good burst off the edge and a knack for getting to the opposing quarterback. Baggs' speed allows him to maneuver well in space and track down opposing ball carriers.

A true linebacker in every sense of the word, Baggs has a keen nose for the football, and physically looks the part of a Big 12 'backer already. Playing in a 3-4 defensive alignment in high school should enable Baggs to make an easy transition to Aggieland, where he'll play in DeRuyter's similar set.

Lining up next to Baggs in the Clear Springs linebacker corps is Trevon Randle, one of the state's top 44 prospects. Randle joins Baggs on Campbell's Super-team, and his 153 tackles, 3 interceptions and 4 fumble recoveries in 2009 led to a very early LSU commitment. However, rumors are beginning to circulate that Randle is considering reopening his recruitment. If he does, look for the Aggies and Sooners to get serious looks.

If Randle doesn't join Baggs in Aggieland, the top linebacking duo will play their last game together at the US Army All-American Bowl in January 2011. Hopefully, that won't be the case. **AJ**

For more Texas A&M recruiting, contact Billy Liucci of the *Maroon & White Report* at (979) 690-7361 or by visiting texags.com

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BRODIE GREENE

Six questions for the Aggie baseball star **BY AI STAFF**

Why did you decide to come back to A&M for your senior season after you were chosen in the 30th round of the draft last year?

I think there were some communication issues back then. After the year I had, I thought I deserved more. I don't regret the decision at all. We won another championship, I had a better year than I did last year and I was drafted higher. It all worked out for the best.

Did you ever imagine that you would jump up to the 4th round this year?

No, not at all. As I've seen in the past, seniors coming back tend to have less productive years than their junior years. I didn't want that to happen. I didn't put any pressure on myself. I just did my work day in and day out and it paid off for me.

How did it feel when you found out you were drafted in the 4th round by the Reds?

It was exciting. We were actually in the middle of a regional game in Miami. Coach Childress caught me in the dugout and said he wanted to be the first one to tell me. I was excited because most teams were looking for me in the 6th to 10th rounds. The earlier the better, so I was pretty excited.

How did it feel to win another Big 12 title and be the guy who hit the game-winning homerun in the championship game?

It was a great tournament for us. We beat Texas one last time – in the last time I got to play against them. And it couldn't have ended any sweeter. If I had to go back and do it all over again, I'd love to be in that moment again. It was a good way to end my senior season and I finished with three rings in four years at A&M. I'm not complaining too much about that.

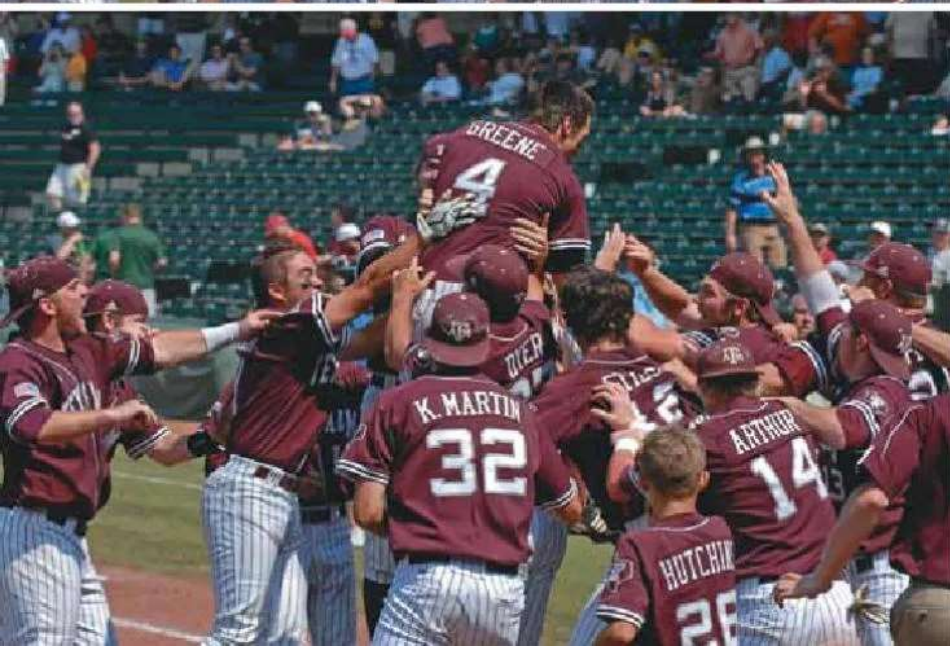
Were you thinking about a homerun before you hit the game-winner?

Not really. I was mainly thinking about splitting a gap somewhere and having Tyler [Naquin] score from first because he was going the whole way. It was going to be all or nothing. I got behind in the count, but luckily got an off-speed pitch that was up. I was able to get a good part of that bat on it and snuck it over the wall.

What are you going to miss most about playing baseball for Texas A&M?

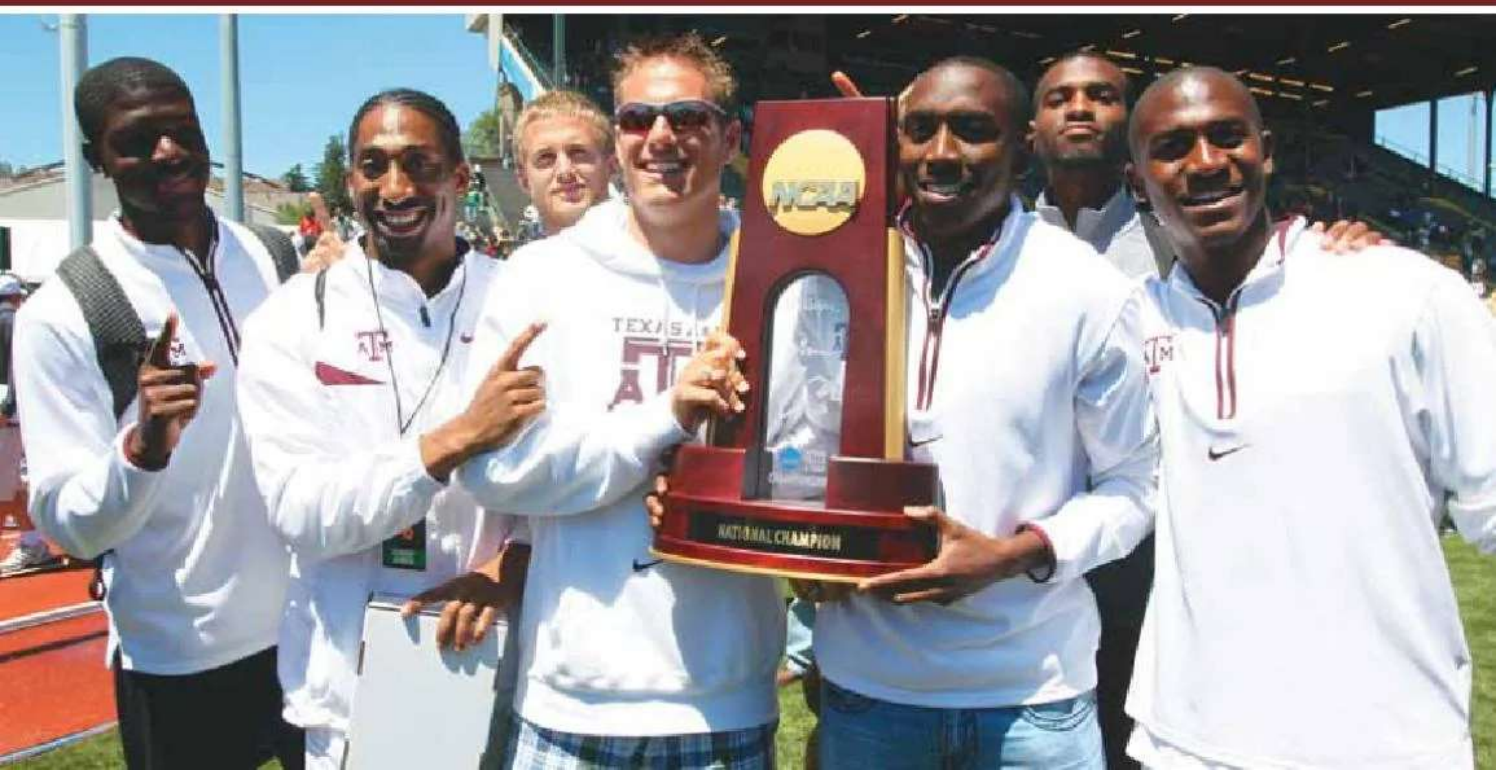
I'll miss the relationships I built with the guys. I was pretty close with everybody in the organization including the coaching staff. You don't really have that in pro ball. **AI**

Visit aggielandillustrated.com/brodie to read the full Brodie Greene Q&A.





(baseball) In mid-April, the Aggie baseball team was struggling mightily and their hopes of playing in the postseason were in serious jeopardy. By the end of May, however, they looked like a team that could go all the way to Omaha. That historic run culminated with a Big 12 tournament championship off of senior Brodie Greene's remarkable 10th inning walk-off homerun in the title game against Baylor (left). The Ags nearly earned a chance to host a regional in College Station, but instead were shipped off to Coral Gables for the Miami Regional. After fighting through the Hurricanes and rain delays, A&M came up short and their season ended in Miami. **(track)** One year after claiming the program's first national titles in men's and women's outdoor track, Pat Henry's squad travelled to historic Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon to defend their crowns. When the last event was complete, both teams had claimed championships – just the second time one school has won consecutive men's and women's team titles. On the women's side, the Aggies won the title with ease over host Oregon. As for the men, their finish was much more dramatic. In their last race – the 4 x 400 relay – the Ags were surprise winners, giving them enough points to finish on top in the final standings.



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12^{top} of the year STORIES

Looking back on Texas A&M athletics in 2009-2010, we give you our picks for the biggest stories of the year BY BRIAN DAVIS '01

01 TO SECEDE OR NOT SECEDE

The college sports world was taken by storm in June with widespread discussions of conference realignment. While extreme changes were expected that would have reshaped college athletics, things ultimately didn't change that much – for now. Texas A&M was right in the middle of the realignment storm and when the dust settled, the Aggies deserved much of the credit (or blame, depending on your point of view) for saving the Big 12 (minus Nebraska and Colorado, that is). Had the Aggies agreed to get in line with Texas, Texas Tech, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, this story would likely be about the new Pac 16 conference. Likewise, if the Ags had made the bold choice to go out on their own and join the SEC, we would have changed the name of our magazine to Aggieland-in-SEC Illustrated. Okay, probably not – but the excitement and anticipation around here would certainly be off the charts. In the end, however, an 11th-hour offer by commissioner Dan Beebe was enough to convince the A&M administration that the best move for the Aggies at this time was to not move at all and remain in the Big 12. It certainly wasn't the popular choice, but the jury will be out for a while to determine if it was the right one. *Read more about conference realignment on page 22.*

02 BAD BREAK

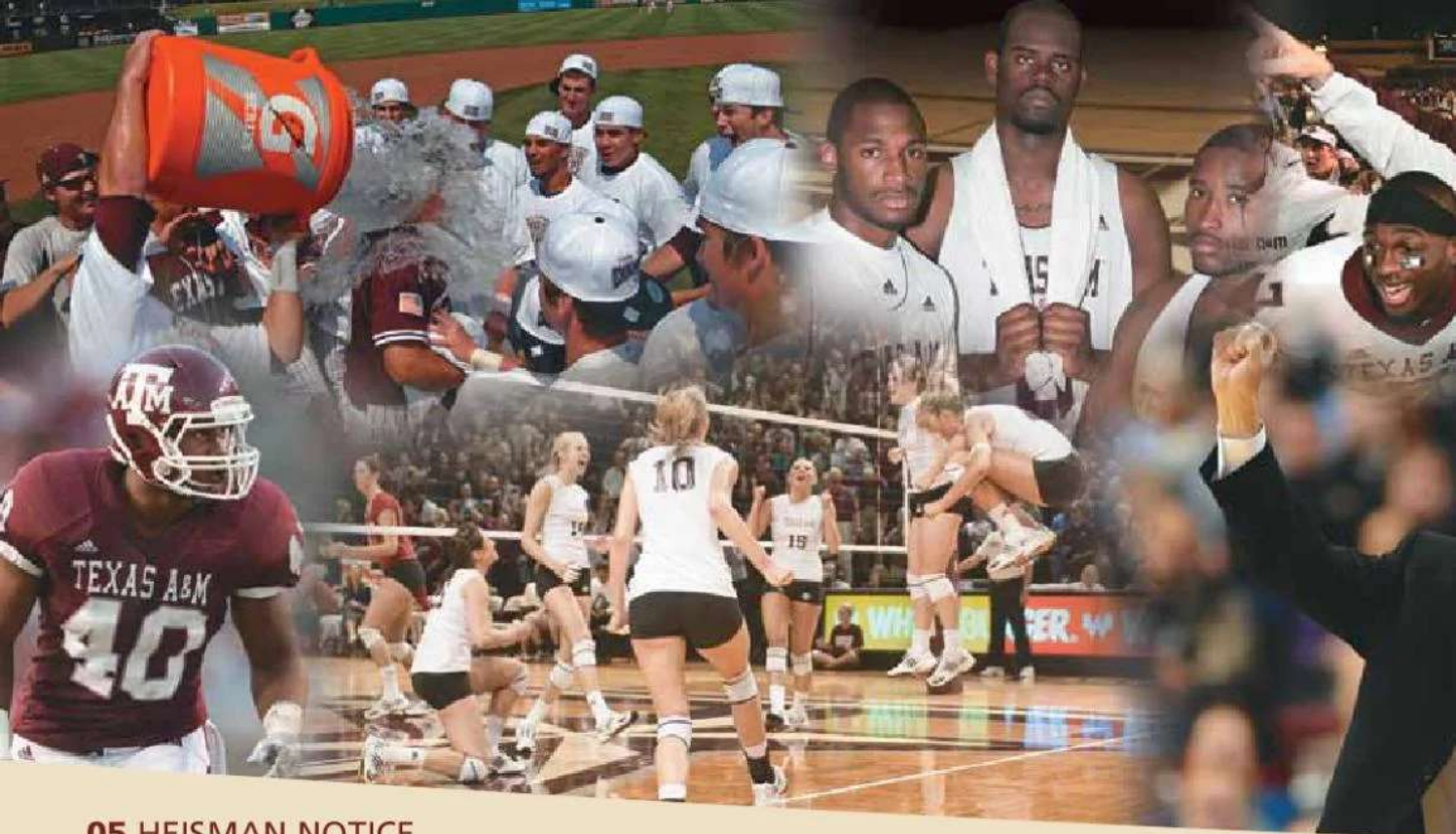
Unfortunately, our next big story of 2009-2010 was not a positive one. It was the break seen around the world when Derrick Roland suffered a gruesome leg injury in the Aggies' basketball game against Washington in December. Seen across the country on national television, the moment was frequently compared to the one former Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann suffered against the New York Giants that ended his career. For Roland, his freakish injury turned out to be a broken right fibula and tibia, requiring surgery and putting an end to his senior season. Considered by many to be the top perimeter defender in the Big 12, Roland was A&M's No. 2 scorer, a team captain and the heart and soul of the program. While he was no longer able to contribute on the court, Roland was an inspiration from the bench for the remainder of the season. As of A's press time, Roland's future is still in the hands of the NCAA. Hopefully they make the right decision and give him his senior season back. If anyone deserves it, Roland does.

03 ALL-AMERICAN AGGIE

Last fall, Von Miller grabbed nearly as many headlines as he did quarterback jerseys. The speedy edge rusher was a menace on the field and a nightmare for opposing blockers and quarterbacks. After posting a modest 3.5 sacks as a sophomore, Miller burst onto the national scene with an NCAA-leading 17 sacks in his junior campaign while starting every game at the hybrid "jack" position. With his extraordinary efforts, Miller earned first-team All-American and unanimous first-team All-Big 12 honors. Showing his versatility as a playmaker, Miller was named a finalist for the Hendricks Award (top defensive end) and a semifinalist for the Butkus Award (top collegiate linebacker). Despite all of his success on the field last fall, Miller's biggest impact on the A&M football program thus far likely came on January 13 – the day he announced that he was not leaving early for the NFL and would return to Aggieland for his senior season.

04 FIVE YEARS AND COUNTING

Aggie basketball continued its rise in national prominence in 2010 with both programs earning their fifth consecutive invitations to the Big Dance. On the men's side, while expectations were already lowered after Chinemelu Elonu's surprise early departure for the NBA, all hope for a successful year seemed lost when Derrick Roland went down with a broken leg. However, with Roland's inspiration from the bench and the senior leadership of Donald Sloan and Bryan Davis on the court, the Ags went on an incredible run in conference play, winning eight of their last ten games and finishing 11-5 to tie for second place in the Big 12. Their success was rewarded with a No. 5 seed in the NCAA Tournament making the Aggies one of just 12 schools to be invited in each of the last five seasons. Meanwhile, the Aggie women struggled briefly during their rugged conference schedule, but came alive towards the end of the season, capturing their second Big 12 tournament title in three years. Gary Blair's squad was rewarded with their third consecutive No. 2 seed in the NCAA Tournament. Both teams lost heartbreakers in the second round of the Big Dance. The men fell by two points to Purdue in overtime, while the women lost by one point to Gonzaga.



05 HEISMAN NOTICE

When the Longhorns arrived in Aggieland for the traditional Thanksgiving battle last fall, the only player garnering any significant Heisman Trophy attention was Texas quarterback Colt McCoy. When the game was over, however, it was A&M junior quarterback Jerrod Johnson who had thrust himself into the spotlight with an amazing performance in front of a national TV audience. McCoy had a great game as well and his team ultimately won the game, but Johnson's numbers were just as spectacular and were put up against the Longhorn's third-ranked defense. Johnson completed 26 of 33 passes for 342 yards with four touchdown passes, and if not for several special team breakdowns, he would have likely led his team to a monumental upset. Despite being outscored, Johnson's big game vaulted him into the conversation for the 2010 Heisman Trophy and helped him secure consensus second-team All-Big 12 honors in 2009 and most likely first-team preseason all-conference honors in 2010.

06 BACK TO BACK CHAMPS

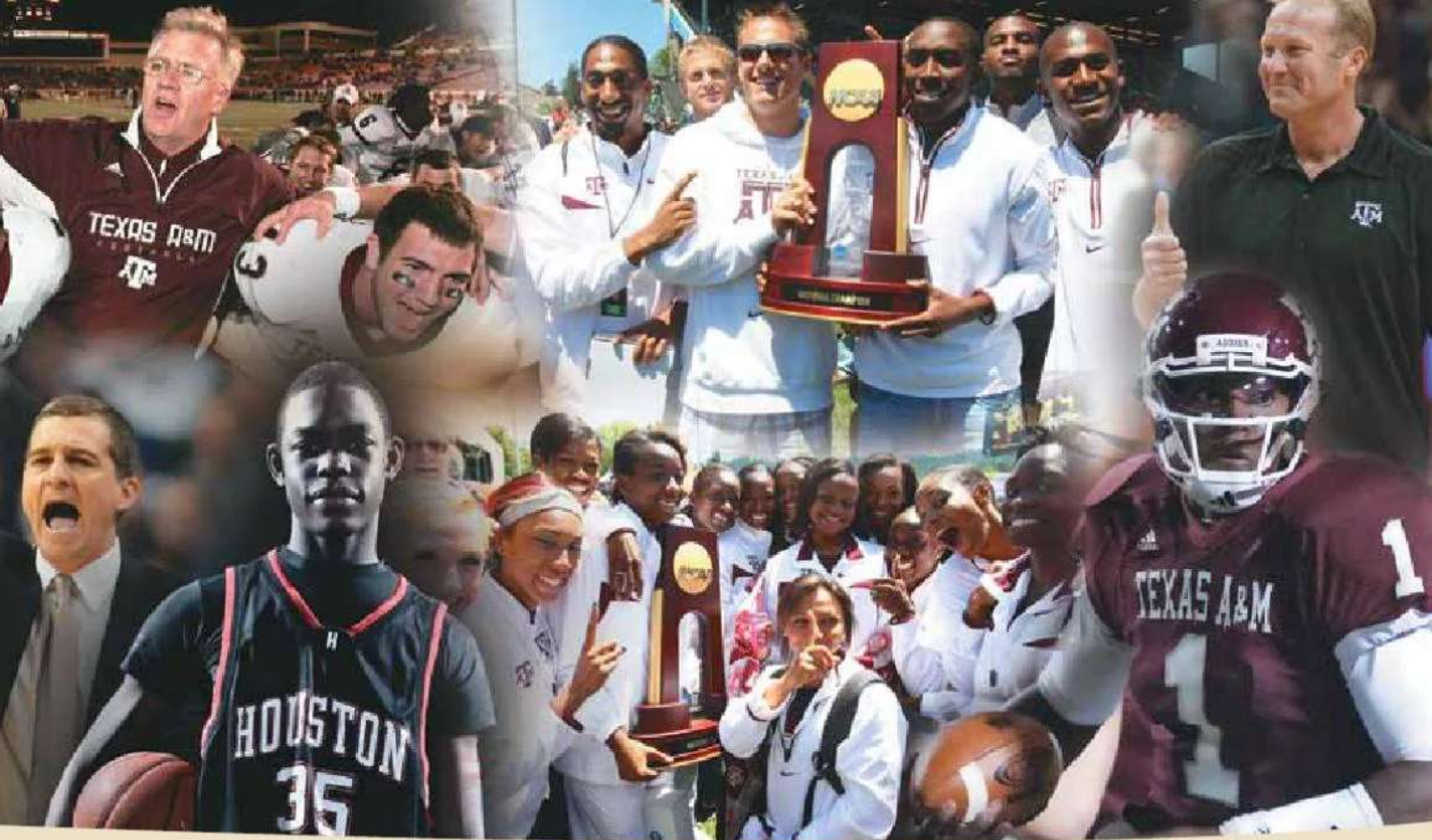
It's safe to say that Pat Henry is building a dynasty with his Aggie track and field program. While the majority of the college athletic world was caught up with the conference realignment soap opera, the A&M men's and women's track teams were trying to defend their 2009 national titles at historic Hayward Field on the University of Oregon campus. The Aggies did just that marking just the second time one school has claimed consecutive men's and women's team titles. It was Henry who coached the LSU squads that accomplished the same double-double titles in 1989-1990. Twenty years later, his Aggie program is the nation's best. The A&M women amassed 72 points, winning the championship by 15 points over runner-up Oregon. Meanwhile, with the championship on the line, the men won their last race (the 4 x 400 relay) to reach 55 points overall, giving them just enough to finish on top over runner-up Florida (54).

07 LUBBOCK LASHING

After starting the 2009 season with three home victories, A&M football took a nosedive beginning with a blowout loss to Arkansas in the inaugural Southwest Classic and ending with an improbable rout by Kansas State. At the midpoint of the season, the Aggies were 3-3 overall and 0-2 in the Big 12, with their next stop in Lubbock – historically one of the worst places for an A&M team to register a win. However, the Ags showed up in west Texas ready to run, and kept running all over the Red Raider defense for a season-high 321 yards. Sophomore Cyrus Gray and freshman Christine Michael both logged the first 100-yard rushing games of their careers, while A&M forced five turnovers. When the final seconds ticked off, the Aggies had done something that they hadn't been able to do since 1993 – win in Lubbock. The 52-30 drubbing of the No. 21 Red Raiders was the first victory over a ranked team for head coach Mike Sherman and the most points ever scored by A&M against Texas Tech.

08 STAYING IN AGGIELAND

From the moment he arrived on campus three years ago, men's basketball coach Mark Turgeon has emphasized that he always puts family first. So when his name started circulating in rumor mills for other coaching jobs this spring, Turgeon responded exactly the way he should have – that he would do whatever is best for his family. While the Aggies were busy preparing to play in the Big 12 tournament, the rumors started heating up in Oregon media outlets. The Ducks had fired their coach, and were targeting several big name candidates including A&M's head man. Although Turgeon had plenty of reasons to stay, fans were obviously nervous about being left again after the way Billy Gillispie departed for Kentucky. Plus, Turgeon was previously an assistant in Eugene, so there was an established connection



there. And after the masterful coaching job he did this season, who wouldn't want to hire him away? Fortunately, when it was all said and done, Turgeon turned down the Ducks' offer and accepted a contract extension at A&M. It was a fitting reward for a coach that has emerged from the shadow of his predecessor and become one of the most successful coaches in Big 12 history. In fact, the Aggies have posted at least 24 wins in all three years of the Turgeon era – a feat that no other coach has accomplished since the inception of the Big 12. In the end, Aggieland was the best place for the Turgeon family and Coach Turgeon is the best basketball coach for Aggieland.

09 HIGHS AND LOWS

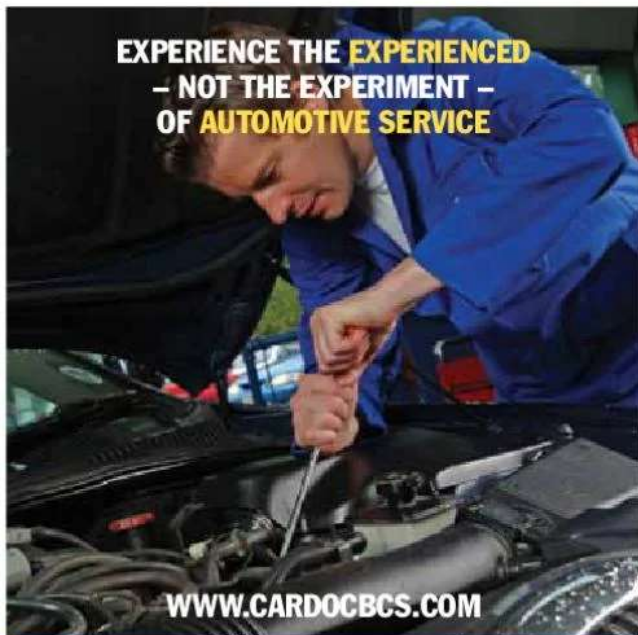
The low point of A&M's baseball season was a mid-April sweep by No. 3 Texas, which included two shutouts in front of sold-out crowds at Olsen Field. However, the team responded well after that setback, winning 16 of their final 21 games of the regular season. Led by the All-American arms of junior Barret Loux and sophomore John Stilson, and the all-conference bats of senior Brodie Greene and sophomore Matt Juengel, the Aggies climbed to a fourth place finish in the Big 12 and carried a ton of momentum into the conference tournament. The team made the most of their opportunities and finished pool play undefeated after taking down Texas Tech, Missouri and No. 1 Texas. In the title game against Baylor, the Aggies found themselves down 3-0 entering the bottom of the eighth inning. After getting their first run home in the eighth, the Ags tied the game with a furious ninth-inning rally. Then, with two outs and a runner on first base in the bottom of the tenth inning, Greene stepped up to bat. He quickly fell behind 0-2 to Bear closer Brooks Pinckard, but sent the next pitch over the left field wall for the championship-winning walk-off home run. The win gave the Aggies their third

Big 12 title in the last four seasons and clinched a bid for their fourth consecutive NCAA Tournament.

10 STAFF SHAKE-UP

It's usually cause for concern when a college football coaching staff has a lot of turnover in the offseason. However, in a move that will heavily impact his future in Aggieland (good or bad), Mike Sherman was patient and thorough while trying to find the right coaches to join his revamped staff. And while they haven't had a chance to prove their value on the field yet, the new staff quickly won over A&M fans based on their experiences and history alone. The first piece of the puzzle was new defensive coordinator and assistant head coach Tim DeRuyter, who left the same position at the Air Force Academy (his alma mater) to replace the retired Joe Kines. With him comes the return of the 3-4 defense, the same alignment used when the Wrecking Crew was wreaking havoc on the football field. If his defense begins to show similar results, he will quickly become the most popular man in Aggieland. Joining DeRuyter and lone holdover Charles McMillian (defensive backs) on the defensive staff were Terrell Williams (defensive line), Nick Toth (outside linebackers) and Dat Nguyen (inside linebackers). While Williams (Purdue) and Toth (The Citadel) were new names to most Aggie fans, Nguyen certainly was not. The former All-Pro Dallas Cowboy and arguably the greatest defensive player to don an Aggie uniform was welcomed home with open arms. Steve Kragthorpe (wide receivers) was the lone addition to the offensive staff, replacing the NFL-bound Nolan Cromwell. Another familiar face to Aggies, Coach Krag was the offensive coordinator during A&M's 1998 Big 12 Championship season. Since leaving Aggieland in 2000 for the Buffalo Bills, Kragthorpe has been the head coach at the University of Tulsa and the University of Louisville.

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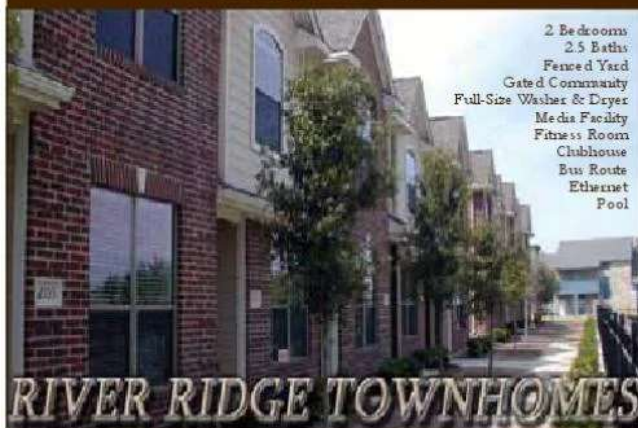
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11 A TRAGIC LOSS

"The world has lost a great kid today." Those were the words uttered by Texas A&M head basketball coach Mark Turgeon when he first commented on the tragic death of Tobi Oyedeji. The 17-year-old from Bellaire High School was set to play basketball for the Aggies next season. He was expected to have an immediate impact on the program, not only with his skills on the court, but also with his personality and character. He was coming to A&M to play basketball and to become an engineer. Oyedeji was the first player Turgeon recruited when he arrived in Aggieland three years ago. "He was really proud to be an Aggie, so he'll always be an Aggie and part of our program," Turgeon said. On Saturday, May 15, only weeks away from graduation and officially joining his new Aggie family, Oyedeji was doing what virtually every high school senior does – going to prom. Then it was off to Dave & Buster's for a school-sponsored after-prom party. After he left, Oyedeji contacted his dad to say he was on his way home. He never made it. His car veered out of its lane and collided with a Jeep around 6:15 that Sunday morning after he lost control of his vehicle. The driver of the Jeep, a nurse at M.D. Anderson, died on the scene, while Oyedeji was transported to the hospital and later passed away when attempts at life-saving surgery were unsuccessful. The Wednesday following the accident, Houston ISD hosted a benefit game between the Yates and Bellaire basketball teams as a way to raise money for Oyedeji's family and honor his legacy. Hundreds of family, friends, fans and complete strangers attended in a fitting tribute to his life – a life that ended much too soon.

If you want to honor Tobi with a monetary donation, the 12th Man Foundation and Texas A&M basketball will accept gifts in any amount to the Tobi Oyedeji Endowed Scholarship. Visit 12thmanfoundation.com for more information.

12 STUNNING UPSET

Going into their final season of college volleyball, four-year starters Sarah Ammerman and Mary Batis had never defeated Nebraska. In fact, the Aggies were facing the possibility of adding to their 19-match losing streak against the perennial powerful Cornhuskers. Needless to say, if there was one opponent that the Texas A&M volleyball program desperately needed to defeat, Nebraska was it. Their big chance finally came when the No. 6-ranked Huskers came to Reed Arena for the conference home opener. In a nationally televised match, Ammerman and Batis led A&M to a stunning 28-26, 17-25, 25-19, 25-19 upset victory. When the winning point was scored, the Aggies erupted in celebration on the court. Not only did the losing streak finally come to the end, the program got a much-needed signature win. Those kinds of wins matter most when the selection committee decides who gets at-large bids to the NCAA Tournament and who doesn't. With their signature win in hand and a fifth place finish in the Big 12, Laurie Corbelli's team finally returned to the tournament for the first time since 2005. The Aggies made the most of their opportunity, stunning 19th-ranked Arizona and No. 15 seed LSU to advance to the Sweet 16. Their season ended at the hands of eventual national runner-up Texas. 

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Von^{AI} Sportsperson of the Year 2010 **MILLER**

BY JEREMY KSIONDA '04

In 2008, Megan Gibson picked up "Sportsperson of the Year" honors after a scintillating senior campaign that led the Aggies all the way to the title game of the College World Series in softball. Last year's award went to Bronson Burgoon, after his miraculous shot on the 18th hole led the Aggies to the national title in men's golf.

Our 2010 selection didn't lead his team to a national title match. He didn't belt home runs, leave batters guessing or tap in birdies. Instead, he crushed quarterbacks, forced fumbles, blew past offensive linemen and became the first Aggie football player to pick up All-American Accolades since 1999. And while those reasons were certainly taken into consideration upon his nomination, there was a larger underlying factor in play.

When Von Miller announced that he would be returning for his senior season rather than entering the NFL Draft, he did more than give the Aggie football team an extra jolt and its first returning All-American on defense since Johnny Holland... he gave the Aggie fan base a sense of excitement and hope for the Wrecking Crew that's been missing for far too long. That's why this year's selection for *Aggieland Illustrated's* third annual "Sportsperson of the Year" was such an easy decision, and why we proudly bestow the honor upon Miller.

"I wanted to come back and play again for my team and my teammates," Miller said in an exclusive interview with AI. "I've been playing with Cyrus (Gray), Tony (Jerod-Eddie) and Garrick (Williams) since I was young. Knowing that I could have another year and knowing that this would be our year to win the Big 12 and then thinking about leaving them behind - I couldn't do it. I really just did it for my teammates and promised my mom that I would finish my degree. This will give me more time to achieve that goal for her and for myself. I knew that we would have a lot of talented freshmen

Visit aggielandillustrated.com/von
to see the full Von Miller shoot.

coming in this year, too. It's going to be the time for the Aggies and I wanted to be a part of that. So I decided to come back and play again, to take another crack at a championship."

Getting a chance to play in new defensive coordinator Tim DeRuyter's 3-4 scheme factored into Miller's decision as well.

"He's very good at what he does and at every other school he's been to he's changed them around drastically," Miller said. "Getting to be a part of that and rush the quarterback, drop back into coverage and be a lot more into the defense with Coach DeRuyter, that was exciting. I knew that coming back this year we would be a lot better than last year. We are going to have a really good team and I wanted to be a part of that."

The importance of senior leadership is a concept that isn't lost on Miller, and he expects the entire team to share in his championship vision.

"Seeing these young guys in the locker room and looking back on what I've been through and knowing that I've been there, it feels good to be able to coach them up and have them actually listen

to me and take my input into consideration," he said. "I try to be a positive role model for the younger guys. Sometimes it's hard to be consistent but it's important to let them see that."

Going into his final season, Miller admits the team has one goal in mind – to win the Big 12.

"If we win the Big 12 and bring the championship back to Aggieland, that's what College Station has been waiting for," he said. "We've been working for it, and to bring it back my last year and the last year of the full Big 12, it would be a big thing for Aggieland. That would mean everything – more than any amount of sacks, tackles for loss... anything."

While Miller will be the first to tell you that he's taking things one day at a time, his memorable journey thus far has been

extremely rewarding.

"I've thought about this experience and how it would all play out. I haven't talked about it to many other people – just my mom and dad and little brother. This is the path that I knew I would take. I just couldn't fully see it. I always thank God for letting me play football and be successful."

Hopefully, Miller is able to see things a little more clearly now that he's entering his senior campaign, and his championship visions will come to fruition. And who knows... perhaps he can even follow in Holland's footsteps as a two-time All-American with another record-breaking performance. We certainly wouldn't mind making him our first two-time "Sportsperson of the Year" award winner, either. **BY**

"If we win the Big 12, that would mean everything – more than any amount of sacks, tackles for loss... anything."

– VON MILLER

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BIG 12 CONFERENCE

Realignment Manifesto



Realignment is more than TV revenue;
it's about Aggies BY DAVID SANDHOP '87

It was a historic time in college football with the landscape of conference partnerships and the talk of super conference realignment filling the airwaves, social networks, and Internet services from the Pac-10 to the Big 12, SEC, Big Ten, and Big East. These potential moves would profoundly affect college football fans, donors, student-athletes and employees of these respective universities. So with so much on the line, why was it that television executives seemed to be the ones making all the moves here?

And as the nation watched all of these poker games and stealth maneuverings by college presidents and athletic directors to squeeze every last million out of the TV networks, did anybody even consider the preferences of the customer – the season ticket holders and the donors of these schools that simply want to watch an entertaining product on Saturday and have a little tailgating fun before and after the game?

During a frantic week of Texas hold 'em, did anybody from Texas or Texas A&M ask the fans and stakeholders of the university what they prefer? Let's look a little deeper into the situation at Texas A&M.

Who has more at stake with realignment – Bill Byrne who will likely retire in the next couple of years and extricate

himself from Texas A&M? How about that ABC/ESPN TV executive punching numbers on his calculator? How about Dan Beebe's financial analyst who has been instructed to unleash his creative juices to come up with his boss's \$20 million promise to Texas, A&M, and OU? Did anybody mention the customer in all of these discussions about TV sets, school networks and severance penalty distributions? Aren't they the ones with most at stake? If my math is correct, aren't a majority of the bills still paid by loyal former students and fans in the form of ticket sales, concessions, merchandising and especially generous donations?

Who finances the student-athlete training facilities, stadiums and arenas? Is ABC/ESPN's name on Reed Arena? Did Fox Sports finance the construction of Kyle Field's end zone expansion a decade ago? Is the CBS Sports logo mounted on the side of the new state-of-the-art track facility? Did Comcast donate considerable sums of money to build the Taj Mahal of athletic facilities, or was it major Texas A&M donors that built the Bright Complex?

This decision made on conference realignment will have significant impact on the university for 20-30 years. It could change the very culture of the athletic department. It could change the Bryan-

College Station community, and it will certainly change the game day experience for all Aggie fans, former students and donors.

So my question is: Why were university executives and TV executives allowed to make this decision in a bubble without some type of formal feedback or formal public hearings where donors, students and fans could directly address these decision makers and let their voices be heard in person and not on a Facebook page?

First and foremost, this decision affects the fans, stakeholders and supporters of Texas A&M athletics. It is the fan that will accept and live with the consequences of these monumental decisions for 30 years... not these executives with a short time horizon left on their careers. They are making short-term money decisions on TV revenues that will have a long-standing impact on the enjoyment and experience of the Texas A&M fan.

I say this because CLEARLY the sentiment from the rank-and-file Aggie faithful is a desire to move to the SEC. I've seen polls with sample sizes in the thousands and did not see one that had an SEC approval rating of less than 90 percent. Not one poll had an approval rating over 10 percent for a move to the Pac-10 or remaining in a smaller Big 12.

We heard numerous instances of high dollar donors threatening to pull their support and their dollars from the athletic department if A&M didn't accept the SEC offer on the table. Many long-time season ticket holders e-mailed me saying that this latest episode of management not following the wishes of their client base is the last straw. They will cut off ties to Texas A&M athletics until a change is made and the people are heard.

This is a fascinating time at Texas A&M and college athletics. This is the first time in my lifetime where a university's former students and fan base have so loudly and unanimously demanded a path for its university that its leaders did not choose. This is really very similar to what has happened in national politics at the grass roots level – does the Tea Party come to mind? In sports, I can think of only one other event that is similar: when Bud Adams asked for public funding on a new stadium for his Houston Oilers and threatened to leave if he didn't get it. Despite city leaders who favored raising taxes to pay for the stadium bonds, the citizens of Houston united, forced a vote, and told Mr. Adams to hit the road. Why? Because it was a bad deal for the citizens of Houston and they acted.

So why was the SEC deal so attractive to A&M fans, and why was the Big 12 Lite proposal so despised? In my best James Carville Louisiana twang – it's the games stupid. As college fans, what excites Aggies more – a home conference schedule consisting of Iowa State, Baylor, Missouri and Oklahoma, or games with LSU, Arkansas, Alabama and Ole' Miss? Is there ANY question that Kyle Field sells out all four SEC games while only the OU game will approach a full house? Increased season ticket sales for an SEC home schedule would also improve attendance to the directional school non-conference September match-ups that in recent years have seen 12,000-15,000 empty seats.

Is there any question that an SEC schedule would energize and motivate the fan base to attend more events, buy more tickets and donate more money? Well, based on the reaction from Aggies during the whole process, that question has been answered with an emphatic YES.

From ticket sales alone minus any donations, I took a few minutes with my calculator to see what the increase in ticket revenues would be comparing the market currently in the Big 12 versus the SEC. Let's assume that the university can sell an additional 5,000 season tickets with an SEC schedule. That increases paying attendance to the three directional non-conference games by a total of 15,000. At \$70 a ticket, that's over \$1,000,000. Now let's assume an OU sellout in the Big 12 scenario, so one of the four SEC conference games is a wash in terms of additional revenues. That leaves three games where A&M currently averages 72,000

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with a sellout capacity of 84,000. That's 12,000 extra tickets sold per game and 36,000 for the three conference games. Multiply that figure by an average ticket price of \$85 and that's approximately \$3,000,000 in increased revenue for a total of \$4,000,000 annually. That's not even considering extra donations, parking, concessions and other peripheral revenue streams on game day.

So even if Dan Beebe can deliver on his \$20 million promise, the total SEC package (\$17 mm + \$4 mm) when you add stadium and donor revenues to the TV equation, the SEC deal is a better business decision.

With that said, the point here is not about the dollars. It is about what Aggies want, not what ABC/ESPN can deliver.

Because you know what, a satisfied Texas A&M former student and fan will unquestionably pay back more to the university in goodwill and donations than the few extra million dollars a TV executive can promise.

In the history of Texas A&M, has there ever been a time when the university called upon its students, former students and supporters and they didn't step up to the plate immediately and support it and see that it prospered?

Texas A&M was a small, insignificant agricultural college in the middle of nowhere 50-60 years ago with an all-male enrollment of under 10,000. Now, Texas A&M is a world-class university with a coed student population of 47,000 and a national player in academic research with one of the largest research endowments in the nation. It is also a university that was being courted by unquestionably the best and most powerful athletic conference in the country. This incredible rise to national prestige and power came as a result of great leaders like Earl Rudder and the entrepreneurial success of many Texas A&M former students who built businesses from the ground up through hard work, and with their great love of the university gave back generously with their dollars and their support to this day.

The university relied on its former students to build it into a formidable national university in the last century. Now it's time for the university leaders to trust its former students once again to ensure that this bold move to the SEC will be a resounding success and that the financial and cultural benefits from this move will be realized for decades to come.

This isn't about a TV contract or severance penalties; it is about what is best for Texas A&M University, and especially its students, former students and stakeholders. If university leaders listened to the overwhelming wishes of its stakeholders and not to frantic conference commissioners and TV executives promising a quick buck, it would pay off exponentially for the university.

We keep hearing from our university leaders and athletic administration that this was a business decision and I wholeheartedly agree. So Texas A&M needs to listen to its customers and stakeholders in this historic moment. **AM**

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Jacob Green was an All-American defensive end for Texas A&M in 1979 after compiling 134 tackles and a school-record 20 quarterback sacks. Green also owns school records for career fumbles caused (12) and fumbles caused in a season (6 in 1978). A first-round draft pick (10th overall) in 1980 by the Seattle Seahawks, Green was an All-Pro defensive end in the NFL during his 13-year career.

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Green and A&M women's basketball coach Gary Blair have been nominated for induction into the Texas Sports Hall of Fame. The public helps determine the selections by participating in the Official Voting Member Program (OVM). Anyone can join and receive an official ballot by going to tshof.org. The sign-up deadline to be able to vote for the upcoming class is August 1, 2010. The official announcement of the Class of 2010 will be made in September.



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